Functioning of New Zonal Railways

*393. SHRIMATI N.R DURGA:

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) how many new Railway Zones were established in 1996;

(b) how many out of them are functioning independently;

(c) whether the Northwestern Zone, inauguarated on 17th October, 1996, was also functioning independently;

(d) the reasons for not constructing its own building, so far; and

(e) the reasons for slackness in ensuring better and smooth functioning of all the proposed Zonal Railways, especially of Western Railway and Northern Railway?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR) : (a) to (e) In 1996, the Government had decided to set up six new Railway Zones and, later in 1998, decision was taken to set up a seventh Zone. None of these Zones, including Northwestern Railway Zone, has so far been functioning independently. On 17th October, 1996, foundation stone for North Western Zone was laid. The progress of setting up of these Zones has been slow for various reasons like resource crunch and non-finalisation of jurisdictions. Officer-on-Special-Duty and some staff were posted and part infrastructure/buidling has also been built so far. It has now been decided to operationalise all the seven new Zones. Two new Zonal Railways viz., North Western Railway and East Central Railway will be operationalised with effect from 01.10.2002 and the other five viz., East Coast Railway, North Central Railway, South East Central Railway, South Western Railway and West Central Railway, will be operationalised with effect from 01.04.2003. The notifications for this prupose have already been issued. As regards Northern and Western Railways, these are the existing Zonal Railways and are already functional.